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Weekly Contributions

[REDACTED] ORE, CIA  
4 January 1950

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

GENERAL: The Inter-American Peace Committee's action on the Cuban-Dominican dispute will not resolve the differences between these two countries (p. 2).

NORTHERN AREA: There is reasonable evidence that Dominicans have interfered in Haitian internal affairs (p. 2). In British Honduras, currency devaluation may be followed by popular demonstrations of protest (p. 3).

CENTRAL AREA: Colombia's Conservative administration has further consolidated its position by enlarging the Council of State (p. 3).

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1. GENERAL: IAPC Action on Cuban-Dominican Dispute

The most recent development in the Cuban-Dominican dispute was the censure of Trujillo by the Inter-American Peace Committee in its 29 December note to the Dominican government. The committee expressed its "grave concern" at the special war powers granted Trujillo by the Dominican Congress and stated its unanimous opinion that all members of the OAS should bear in mind, "on taking any decisions in this respect", the Rio Treaty as well as the United Nations Charter. The committee pointed out, "with particular reference to this case", that all American governments have condemned war and are obligated in their international relations not to resort to threat or use of force incompatible with their international obligations and to settle disputes by peaceful means. In a written reply to the committee, the Dominican government defended Trujillo's recent messages and war powers as "normal reaction" to the situation but pointed out that the Dominican government desires peaceful solution of the dispute and would welcome recommendations of the IAPC.

This action of the Peace Committee -- the result of several weeks' consideration of Cuban and Dominican charges and countercharges -- will not resolve the differences between the two countries.

2. HAITI - DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: War of Nerves

Events following the recent plot to assassinate President Estimé and other ranking Haitian officials  Wkly, 28 Dec 49) provide reasonable evidence of Dominican interference in the internal affairs of Haiti. Shortly after Estimé's revelation of the plot, the Dominican Chargé and First Secretary called together on the US Ambassador, Port-au-Prince. The Chargé stated he had been "deceived" by his government in that, unknown to him, the First Secretary had been acting as go-between for the Haitian conspirators and their confederates in the Dominican Republic, most notable of whom were the exiled Haitian ex-Colonel Roland and Anselmo Paulino, close advisor of Trujillo. He further expressed the conviction that Trujillo is backing Roland with arms and money, and "firmly intends to attack Haiti in one way or another." The First Secretary added that the Haitian conspirators intended to murder the staff of the Dominican Embassy and thus give Trujillo an excuse to invade Haiti. Both diplomats have subsequently fled to the US, thereby leaving the Dominican Embassy with no one in charge.

The US Embassy believes in the sincerity of the Chargé, and  gives credence to the Chargé's allegation of Dominican complicity in the plot against the Haitian government. Trujillo (himself a mulatto) and the Dominican white-mulatto elite despise the "black" regime of President Estimé, who came to power after the overthrow in 1946 of President Lescot, a light mulatto who collaborated closely with Trujillo. The color-conscious Dominicans, despite their military superiority, view with alarm the mounting pressure on the border of the black Haitian population. This fear of ultimate

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assimilation by the more numerous Haitians is doubtless at this time -- as it has been in the past -- a factor in the Dominican attempt to weaken Haiti by promoting internal dissension and instability.

While unfavorable international repercussions may cause the Dominicans to desist from this activity, at least temporarily, their underlying attitude toward Haiti is such that further interference in Haiti's internal affairs can be anticipated.

3. BRITISH HONDURAS: Unrest results from currency devaluation

Some uneasiness has resulted from the Governor's decision to restore the previous relationship of the British Honduras dollar to the pound (in effect a thirty percent reduction from its former parity with the US dollar). This action was taken against the expressed will of the Legislative Council. The British Hondurans had benefited from the lower prices of imports from the sterling area that had followed devaluation of the pound last September. The revaluation of the British Honduras dollar will entail the loss of these temporary advantages but was necessitated by the falling off of sales to the sterling area and a speculative flight from the British Honduras dollar in anticipation of its revaluation. A rise in the cost of living -- which will probably follow since the bulk of imports come from the dollar area -- together with already existing heavy unemployment will probably cause manifestations of unrest among the population. Local security forces, however, appear capable of maintaining law and order.

4. COLOMBIA: Further consolidation of Conservative position

President Ospina's 29 December decree appointing four new councilors of state should be interpreted both as further Conservative consolidation of their position and as evidence that the state of siege will not soon be lifted. The appointment of the new councilors and the dismissal (with technical justification) of one of the incumbents eliminates the Liberal majority on the council. The Conservatives will undoubtedly find the new majority helpful in connection with the council's functions as supreme administrative tribunal, the final arbiter in judicial actions against government officials. A more pressing reason, however, is that council of state concurrence is needed for new expenditures when the congress is not in session. Because of the greater importance of the council of state during a state of siege, this move to assure a pro-Conservative majority therein would seem to offer further evidence that the Conservative government does not at present contemplate lifting the state of siege (which would automatically bring the congress into session) unless and until there is a radical change in the present intransigent attitude of the Liberal Party.

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